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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9181  
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 0082  
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0037  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFIASS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFIASS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RHMFIASS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RUEHMK/COMUSNAVCENT PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 000811

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/04/2027

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [EAID](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#) [MY](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ: MALAYSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER TO VISIT BAGHDAD  
MAY 12

REF: A. KUALA LUMPUR 758 - GOM MIGHT RESPOND TO IRAQI  
REQUESTS  
[¶](#)B. KUALA LUMPUR 419 - FM CONSIDERS BAGHDAD VISIT  
[¶](#)C. KUALA LUMPUR 381 - PAKISTAN INITIATIVE  
[¶](#)D. 06 KUALA LUMPUR 2271 - MALAYSIA'S OIC ROLE

Classified By: Political Section Chief Mark D. Clark, reasons 1.4 (b and d).

Summary

[¶](#)1. (C) Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar plans to visit Baghdad on May 12. FM Hamid has requested meetings with Iraq's senior political leaders during his 12-hour stop. The Iraqi embassy in Kuala Lumpur is not aware of any Malaysian deliverables; however, FM Hamid's visit represents a positive political gesture toward the Iraqi government and supports Prime Minister Abdullah's interest in demonstrating a greater Malaysian role in key Middle East issues. We consistently have urged Malaysia to take up a constructive role in relation to Iraq, and FM Hamid's visit represents an important step forward. End Summary.

Twelve-hour Bilateral Mission

[¶](#)2. (C) Iraqi Charge Hoshiar Dazayi confirmed to polchief on May 4 that Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar planned to visit Baghdad for 12 hours on May 12. FM Hamid would engage in bilateral talks with senior Iraqi leadership, and Hamid had requested meetings with the Iraqi President, Prime Minister, a Deputy Prime Minister, and the Speaker of the Parliament, in addition to the Iraqi Foreign Minister. Hamid's mission would be bilateral in nature, and would not be carried out under Malaysia's role as OIC chairman. The visit followed the Iraqi Foreign Minister's invitation to Hamid (ref B). According to the Iraqi Charge, Hamid reached the decision to proceed with the Baghdad mission while traveling with Prime Minister Abdullah in Darfur.

Public Announcement after Cabinet Meeting

[¶](#)3. (C) Hoshiar said the Foreign Minister's travel to Baghdad

would be discussed during Malaysia's Wednesday cabinet meeting, May 9, and would receive final approval at that time. The GOM would publicly announce the visit on May 10. Hoshiar believed the cabinet discussion to be a formality, showing polchief the Malaysian diplomatic note he received to confirm the travel. Security concerns could lead to a postponement, Hoshiar acknowledged, as FM Hamid was extremely nervous about conditions in Baghdad.

¶4. (C) According to Hoshiar, FM Hamid intended to travel with a small party consisting of several aides and two cameramen. Hoshiar also would accompany the Foreign Minister. Hamid would use a charter aircraft for the journey. The Iraqi Charge provided us with a copy of the flight itinerary proposed by the charter company Jet Aviation of Zurich, Switzerland. (Note: DAO has received an inquiry from the Malaysian Armed Forces suggesting the GOM also is considering a military aircraft. All relevant information, including Malaysian enquiries regarding flight clearances and security, has been forwarded via DAO channels. End Note.) Hoshiar said the Iraqi government had begun to make arrangements for ground security.

Positive Gesture, Short on Deliverables

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¶5. (C) Hoshiar stated he was unaware of any deliverables FM Hamid might present in Baghdad. Nevertheless, the visit would be positive in and of itself as a political gesture toward the Iraqi government, and could serve as the basis for follow up actions. Hoshiar discussed a number of proposals for Iraqi leaders to raise with Hamid, including training and scholarships in Malaysia for Iraqi officials and citizens, humanitarian aid, approval for an expanded Iraqi diplomatic

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presence in Malaysia, and possible construction contracts for Malaysian firms in "safer" areas, such as in Kurdish territory. Malaysia had already forgiven "legal" Iraqi debts, which derived from past palm oil sales. The Iraqi debts to Malaysia that remained were "illegal debts," which resulted from unspecified Malaysian sales in violation of previous UN sanctions. Because of the potential for embarrassment, both the Iraqi and Malaysian governments had decided not to address the illegal debts for the time being.

Demonstrating Malaysia's Relevance (at Least to Malaysians)

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¶6. (C) Concrete deliverables and actions aside, Hoshiar thought that Prime Minister Abdullah viewed Hamid's mission as a way to support a greater Malaysian role in the Middle East (reflets). Although Malaysia is not part of the current Sharm El-Sheik conference, Hamid's stop in Baghdad would serve to demonstrate, at least to fellow Malaysians, his country's relevance to critical Muslim world issues like Iraq. Hoshiar remarked, however, that his government would not take seriously any Malaysian offer to mediate between Muslim groups in Iraq, describing this notion as ridiculous given Malaysia's lack of standing in Iraq and its aversion to Shi'a Islam.

Comment

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¶7. (C) We consistently have urged Malaysia to take up a constructive role in relation to Iraq, and FM Hamid's visit represents an important step forward. Other than technical questions regarding flight arrangements and flight security, the Malaysian government has not approached us regarding the mission, and specifically has not raised interest in meeting with U.S. officials in Baghdad. Given its OIC leadership position and domestic public opinion strongly opposed to U.S.-led actions in Iraq, Malaysia very likely sees a need to distance its bilateral visit from any U.S. or Coalition role.

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